

**Sample**



## **Low Cost Promotion**

**How to promote your business  
for little or no cost**

**by Gihan Perera and Candy Tymson**

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## Introduction

Running a small to medium sized business is challenging – particularly in a competitive market.

How do you stand out from the crowd, without having to invest a fortune? What are some low-cost options that are easy to apply and sure to work? How do you build your reputation as a credible supplier without having to play the discount war? What are some easy ways to market on the Internet?

We answer all of these questions – and more – in this book. You will learn how to promote your business cost-effectively, both on and off the Internet.

The authors, Gihan Perera and Candy Tymson, are experts in their respective fields. Gihan has worked with clients around the world to help them market and sell using the Internet. Candy's background is in publicity and marketing, and she has taught her clients how to generate millions of dollars worth of publicity. Both have successfully used these techniques to build their businesses and the businesses of their clients.

All the ideas are easy to apply, simple to manage and proven to get results.

## Is This Book For You?

This book is for you if you run a small or medium-sized business, and you're looking for ways to promote your products or services – both on and off the Internet – without a large budget.

If you don't have a big budget, it means that you can't afford to waste a cent on expensive marketing campaigns. It means that you have to guarantee that every dollar you spend in promotions returns at least twice that in profit. It means that you will keep a closer watch on your promotional results.

## What's In This Book?

This book is in two sections. The first half is about low-cost off-line promotional ideas – that is, not Internet-based but using traditional techniques. The second half is about low-cost promotional ideas using the Internet. Some require a Web site; others don't.

Keep in mind that the most effective marketing campaigns combine both on-line and off-line techniques. Although we're discussing them separately, that's only to help organise the material in this book. In your business, any marketing campaign might draw on ideas from both parts of the book.

Candy is the main author for the first part, and Gihan is the main author for the second part. However, we did collaborate on the entire book, so the ideas we share come from our collective experience.

## PART ONE: Low Cost Promotion Off-Line

### with Candy Tymson



With more than 25 years experience in marketing & public relations, Candy is the co-author of the *Australian & New Zealand Public Relations Manual*, the recognised textbook used in colleges and universities in both countries.

A professional speaker and business coach, Candy is a former Lady Mayoress of Sydney. She raised one million dollars in one night at a major fundraising event.

She has co-ordinated many high profile events and marketing campaigns for some of Australia's Top 100 companies. Candy is also the author of *Gender Games: Doing Business with the Opposite Sex*.

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In this part of the book, we're going to cover various methods of promoting your business without (necessarily) using the Internet.

Although there are hundreds of marketing methods available, our main focus will be publicity. In my experience, getting free publicity can be far more powerful than most paid promotions. So we'll look at:

- ⇒ How to get publicity
- ⇒ How to make yourself newsworthy
- ⇒ How to work with the media
- ⇒ How to write a powerful media release
- ⇒ How to perform successfully in interviews

Then I'll also talk briefly about some other marketing methods, such as:

- ⇒ Networking
- ⇒ Newsletters
- ⇒ Sponsorship
- ⇒ Joint Ventures
- ⇒ Billboards

## The Power of Publicity

Of all the off-line promotional techniques available, the one likely to bring the highest return on investment is publicity. Although we will discuss a number of other promotional methods as well, we focus on getting publicity coverage.

There are three important reasons why publicity works:

1. Credibility – a third-party endorsement is worth much more than paid advertising.
2. Coverage – you can get wide coverage in a range of media that would otherwise be inaccessible to you
3. Cost – getting free publicity can save you thousands of dollars in advertising costs

Let's look at each of these in turn.

### Credibility

You probably know that “word of mouth” advertising, where someone tells a friend or relative about your business, is invaluable. After all, if a friend recommends a product, that makes you feel a lot more comfortable about buying it than by reading an advertisement about it. Publicity works the same way.

Most people underestimate the value of having editorial coverage about their business, their products, or their service. Publicity is really a third party endorsement, so it carries more weight than paid advertising.

A lot of people spend a great deal of money on advertising. The challenge with that is it's really just you blowing your own trumpet. If you get editorial coverage, though, then it's *somebody else* saying that your product or service is good. Publicity boosts your credibility, too. Once you get publicity coverage, you can then build on it – for example, by sending copies of the article to your clients. Imagine their reaction: “If the BRW says you're good, you *must* be good”. This works because it's not just you singing the praises of your business through advertising – it's a third party endorsing you.

Building a presence through relevant newspapers and publications takes time and effort. You'll first need to establish yourself as an expert in a particular area who is a reliable source of information. We'll show you how to do this later.

## Coverage

Many people seriously underestimate the value of their local newspapers. I ask audiences how many read their local paper, and about 80% of them raise their hands. I've received publicity coverage from major television stations, on radio, and a variety of other areas such as magazines and journals; but I always find that I get more response from my local paper than from any other source.

Think about how you could get publicity in *your* local paper. But keep in mind what “local” really means: It’s not just the local paper where you live. It’s the local paper where you work, it’s the local paper where you do business, and it may be the local paper of your home town. You simply require something in common with the area where the paper is circulated. Editors of local papers are *always* looking for stories of local interest.

For instance, in my case, I could send an idea to one paper as, “Candy Tymson, who *lives* in this area...” and to another paper as, “Local business person Candy Tymson ...” and to a third as, “Candy Tymson, who recently *spoke* in this area”. You can contact a number of local papers as long as you have something in common with the area where they are distributed.

## Cost

Getting publicity can be extremely inexpensive.

If you do it yourself, of course it takes more of your time. But you will notice that – like everything you do – the more you do it, the easier it becomes.

You may decide, however, that it would be more cost-effective to hire a professional. If you hire a public relations agency or publicity consultant, the cost can be as low as a couple of thousand dollars or as high as tens of thousands of dollars. We’ll look at cost in more detail in a later chapter.

## Control

While there are a number of benefits of getting editorial coverage in the form of publicity, also keep in mind that you *lose* some control over your message.

For example, if you place an advertisement, you know exactly what it's going to say, you know when it's going to appear, and where it's going to appear – you're in total control.

With publicity, as soon as you send out your information, it is out of your hands. It can be changed or it might not get run at all.

That doesn't mean that you shouldn't seek publicity. Far from it. It simply means that publicity should make up only one part of your overall marketing mix.

## Making the News

What makes something interesting enough to appear in print? Most people say they can't think of anything they do that could be newsworthy, so let me give you a few ideas.

There are a number of ways you can develop newsworthy items. First, identify where you want to get publicity coverage. Then get a copy of that publication, or watch that news program, and notice what types of stories they cover. The key is to determine your target market, and then find out what they read, listen to and watch.

For example, most local papers have a computer section that appears daily or weekly. My co-author Gihan is an expert in the area of computers, IT, and technology, so it makes sense for him to contact the editors of the paper's IT section with a new idea, a new product, or an observation worthy of coverage.

The same is true with the major media. They usually interview the same people. Why? Because these people step forward and *say that they are experts*. So if you have an expertise or an area of research that's unique to you, the media are interested in talking to you. Often, *they* will seek experts to keep in their address books so they can quickly get a quote or an opinion about a news item. But don't make the mistake of waiting for them to find you – seek *them* out. Study the media to determine what they're looking for.

What makes news? Anything that's new! The word "news" says it all. It might be a new product or a new service; it might be a new person who has joined your organisation. Anything that's new really does make news.

You might be thinking, "I understand how experts come up with new ideas, new products, new approaches, maybe a new angle on something that's old... but what if I'm not an expert? What if I'm running a corner shop somewhere... can I still get publicity?"

### Be an Expert

Yes, you can get publicity, but the first thing you'll have to do is to start to *think* of yourself as an expert. You may not be an expert on the level of a Bill Gates if you're running a local store. But you're certainly an expert in your local community and what's going on in your local area.

I sometimes talk to doctors, dentists, or other local professionals, and I say, "You're an expert in a particular area in your field, and you're certainly an expert in *this* local area – so if you're seeking publicity in your area, you *are* an expert".

Being an expert doesn't mean you have to know *everything* – you just need to know your product, your service, and your local area or niche.

## Get a Gimmick

The second idea is to use a gimmick. For example, my first name is Candy, and my gimmick is the color candy pink. I sign all of my letters in pink, all of my promotional material is pink, and I wear pink suits. People tend to remember me both for my expertise *and* for my gimmick.

Your gimmick can be as simple as a slogan. Driving down the Pacific Highway in Sydney, I noticed a big truck with the slogan, "Pacific Sewage Company – we're number one in the number two business". Their gimmick is their slogan... and it's certainly memorable!

One of my colleagues owns a blind shop that sells blinds, awnings, and window shades. He's located on the main street of his town, and his gimmick is, "The blind guy between two optometrists," because he has an optometrist on either side of his shop. People remember him.

Your gimmick might be a mascot. It could be an unusual logo, a slogan, or some sort of fun thing you do that nobody else does.

I met a dentist recently who arranges to have a birthday cake if a client comes in the week of their birthday. It's a simple touch, but patients remember it, and they talk about it. The dentist gets favourable publicity simply from being thoughtful.

## Break a Record

Breaking a record isn't for the faint-hearted, but it can get you a lot of publicity. You could team up with charities to make it even more successful.

For example, a local hairdresser can reach an arrangement with a local charity to generate publicity for both. They establish if there's already a record in the *Guinness Book of Records* on the number of haircuts given in a day, and then they try to break that record. It gets the community involved. It gets the local newspapers involved. Newspapers are typically more likely to print stories about charities, and the charity itself will also help promote the event (and you).

Here's another example used successfully by a local Toastmasters International club, which teaches people how to speak in public. One local club was looking for new members, and they knew they wouldn't get coverage by simply sending out a news release saying, "Toastmasters is looking for new members". One of the members was looking through the *Guinness Book of Records*, and he noticed there was a record for the longest after-dinner speech (which, believe it or not, was thirty six hours and forty minutes).

So he set out to break that record. As you would expect, it didn't create a lot of interest initially, but when he got close to breaking the record, suddenly the media appeared. The man got so excited that he broke the record by two hours, and he's now in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

As a result of that very simple idea, they got major radio, television, and newspaper coverage for Toastmasters – and their membership enquiries increased by 30%.

As you can see from this example, you don't have to break an Olympic record to make news. You can even make up your own record. For example, you could say, "We're going to have the most number of scouts in a phone booth," or, "We'll have a gumboot-throwing contest and break a record". Simply come up with a fun idea, and if nothing else it creates an interesting photograph.

### **Take a Stand**

In most communities, people are looking for leaders willing to take a stand. If you can identify an important issue in your industry or profession, then why not become the spokesperson for it? Stand up and say something about it and start to generate interest. It's another good way to get publicity – and you may make a positive difference in your community or profession, too.

### **Discuss Trends and Research**

Research is another good way to generate publicity. Ask yourself: What trend in my industry or in my profession can I promote?

For example, one of my areas of focus is gender differences. Many people were saying that women can't get ahead because of the glass ceiling. So I teamed up with a major businesswomen's network to conduct a survey of their members. They sent an e-mail

survey to all of their 10,000 members, saying, "Please take a minute to fill out this survey. We want to get your impression as to what's really happening in business today. We want your thoughts about why women feel they're not getting ahead".

Over one thousand and two hundred women filled out the survey online. They said that their number one reason holding them back in business today was a lack of self-promotion. That made a great story because it contradicted the commonly-held belief. We wrote a news release with the results, and targeted it to radio and television outlets. It received excellent publicity coverage.

However, here's the key: *The survey results didn't matter*. It would have been newsworthy *anyway* – regardless of the results – simply because it was the latest research. The fact that it gave an unexpected result was a bonus.

That is just one very simple idea using research. I continue to conduct the survey every two years to see whether there have been any changes. Even if there aren't any changes – that's a story too.

How can you apply this idea to *your* business? What things have changed about your customers or your products? Why have they changed? What research can you do to show why the change has taken place?

For example, if you run an ice cream shop, and you've noticed that your customers buy more low-fat products than they used to, conduct your own survey and ask your

customers why. Compile the top reasons, and you'll possibly have a newsworthy story. Or even the most popular flavour of the season would be a fun story.

### Release Something New

You can create a new product, or you can simply give advice about new products. Maybe you've been to a conference overseas and you're aware of a new product that's coming to Australia.

In Gihan's area of expertise, suppliers constantly create new products. He can analyse the new products coming out and determine which are relevant or of interest to his customers, and then compile a report comparing them. It's a valuable service for clients, it enhances his credibility, and it makes for great publicity too.

Or you can create a new product of your own, and launch it in a newsworthy way. One option is to team up with a well-known person and get *them* to endorse the product.

For example, if you're a hairdresser in your local area and you've come up with a new hair-do, a new style or a new colour, you could get a well-known celebrity (even a local celebrity) to be your model. You can take "before" and "after" photos to show the change you've made.

You might be daunted at the prospect of approaching a celebrity. But remember that they are seeking publicity as well, so they might jump at the chance.

Keep in mind that photographs add to your chance of getting published. Even if you're contacting radio stations, if you can send them a photograph of the product, it makes a difference.

Wherever possible, include testimonials from some of your clients demonstrating the positive results they have gained.

Remember to sell the *benefits* of your new product, rather than just talking about its features. Focus on what it can *do* for the listeners or readers. And if it's done something great for someone famous, that's all the better.

You can also contact a media outlet and say, "We've got a new product; can we do a joint promotion?" That way you'll get natural publicity about the product from the media outlet. For instance, it can be used as a prize in a contest with either a newspaper or radio station.

## Be Controversial

Being controversial, like breaking a record, is not for the faint-hearted, but it can be very effective in some cases. Usually it simply requires you to say the opposite of what everyone else is saying!

For example, if I don't believe that the glass ceiling is holding women back in business today, and everyone else is saying it is, I could be controversial by coming forward and

saying, "Look, that's a lot of rubbish. What's really holding women back in business today is lack of self-promotion and I've just done a survey that's confirmed it".

Being controversial gets you in the news, but you've got to have solid information to back your position. Otherwise you're just opinionated, and that won't necessarily be newsworthy. You also have to be comfortable with what you're saying; otherwise you're going to affect your credibility. As long as you can back up your position with facts or research, use it to get publicity coverage.

## PART TWO: Low Cost Promotion On-Line

### with Gihan Perera



Gihan Perera is a business consultant, speaker, author and entrepreneur – with clients throughout Australia, and in New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, the U.K. and Canada. He works with professional speakers and trainers, consultants, business owners, CEOs and strategic leadership teams to improve their marketing, sales and persuasion skills in one-on-one meetings, group presentations and on the Internet.

He is the author of the books *Secrets of Internet Business Success How to Create a Five-Star Web Site* and *Write Now*. He has also written numerous e-books and created audio products on effective Web sites and success with information products.

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In the early days of the Web, many companies that tried mass-marketing advertising techniques failed miserably. They poured millions of dollars into their on-line promotions, with hardly anything in return.

This led to the inevitable “Dot-com crash”, and scared off many businesses from using the Internet as a marketing medium. Yet, this wasn’t the death of the Internet; it was merely the demise of this business model. Today, more businesses than ever are using the Internet for marketing – and many of them are making lots of money from it.

However, many Web site owners still make mistakes with their Internet marketing. Some do no marketing at all, but more commonly, they do the *wrong* sort of marketing.

In this second part of the book, we’ll look at ways of marketing your products and services effectively on the Internet – and for little cost.

I find that many Web site owners fall into the trap of thinking about the *technology* of Internet marketing too soon. They jump in feet first with questions about pay-per-click advertising, search engine optimisation, newsletters, blogs and similar technology tools. However, they might not yet have considered their market and what value they offer to that market.

We *will* cover all the marketing technology I’ve mentioned above – and more – but first I’ll start with some basic issues to consider *before* you start using the technology:

⇒ Knowing your relationship with your market

- ⇒ Finding a profitable niche
- ⇒ Identifying your expertise

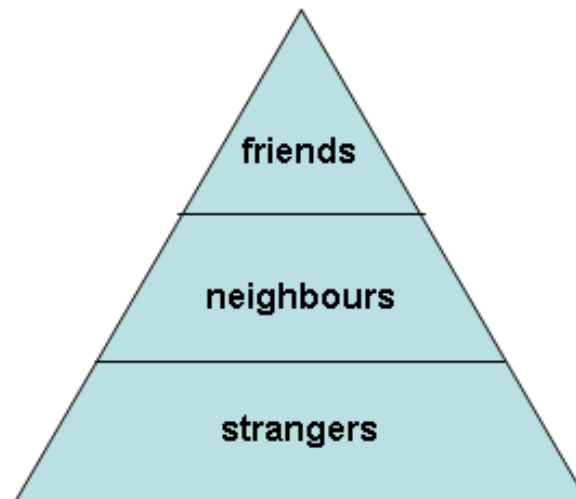
Then we'll move on to specific Internet marketing techniques:

- ⇒ How to convert your visitors into paying customers
- ⇒ How to promote your expertise using newsletters, articles, blogs and e-books
- ⇒ How to advertise on Google
- ⇒ How to use joint ventures effectively

## Focus on the Right People

Some Web site owners focus all their marketing efforts on getting “traffic” (Web site visitors) from search engines such as Google. This might be exactly the right strategy for some Web sites, but it’s entirely wrong for others. If that’s your *only* strategy and it doesn’t suit you, you’ll waste a lot of time, money and effort.

To solve this problem, first understand the relationship that you have with your Web site visitors. Broadly, they fall into three categories:



The top group, which I call “friends”, are your customers – that is, people who have paid you in the past for your products and services.

At the bottom are “strangers” – those who have never heard of you before. They may have found you through a search engine, by reading an article on another Web site, by finding your Web address in a newspaper, or by some other means.

The “neighbours” are those who have heard about you but are yet to become customers. They might be, for example, the people on your free e-mail newsletter mailing list.

### **Market differently to each group**

Of these three groups, which is the largest? Well it’s most likely to be strangers, of course. And that’s why many Web site owners spend all their efforts on attracting them to their Web site.

However, the catch is that they are also the most difficult market to convert into customers. They don’t know you, like you or trust you – yet. So it takes a much more concerted sales effort to convince them to buy from you.

On the other hand, the *easiest* to convince are your existing customers – your “friends”. People who have bought from you in the past are much more likely to buy from you again. Even if it’s the smallest of the three groups, it might be far more responsive – and hence far more profitable.

So when you consider each marketing technique we cover here, keep in mind whether you're marketing to friends, neighbours or strangers.

In my experience, most Web site owners make the mistake of too much "stranger marketing" and not enough "friend marketing". Focus on your customers, and you might discover a gold mine of profits waiting for you.

That doesn't mean that you shouldn't market to strangers. Some Web site owners do very well with their "stranger marketing", but it does require a lot of work.

### **Move them up the hierarchy**

One effective way to market to strangers is to make a "softer" offer than a direct sale. In other words, instead of pushing your products or services directly at them immediately, start by offering something else, like an e-book, an article, a special report, a free sample, or some other gift.

By doing this, you start the relationship with them, turn them into a "neighbour", and eventually convince them to buy from you so they become "friends".

## Find a Niche

The big secret for on-line promotion – especially for smaller businesses that don't have deep pockets and multi-million-dollar advertising budgets – is to focus on a niche market.

In other words, don't be a McDonald's that tries to sell hamburgers to everyone. Rather, build a product or service for a specific segment of a particular market.

For example, Internet marketing expert Frank Kern wrote an e-book about teaching parrots to talk. This e-book brings him \$1,500 a month in sales – and it's all passive income.

The secret of his success is that he chose a very specific market: Parrot lovers. His e-book is not about a broad topic like teaching your *bird* to talk. It's not about bird *watching* or bird *care*. It's a very specific topic with a very specific audience.

## Teach your niche

When you know there's a market for your topic, tailor your Web site to focus on that market's needs and interests. In particular, *write articles*, don't just promote your products and services.

To understand why this works, consider how search engines work. A search engine like Google gets paid by advertisers. Advertisers only pay if many people click on their ads.

Many people will only use Google as long as it continues to provide highly relevant search results.

So Google's job is to provide **highly relevant search results**. This attracts searchers, which in turn attracts advertisers, who pay Google, and everybody lives happily ever after.

What does "highly relevant" mean? It means that the pages Google presents to the searcher provide the information that they are seeking. And one of the most important criteria that Google uses is the title of the Web page. So choose your page titles carefully, and match them to the most popular search terms.

### One market at a time

It's important to understand that you don't have to write your whole Web site around a single word or phrase. Instead of asking, "How do I get people to my Web site?", ask yourself, "How do I get people to *this page* on my Web site?" This key difference can make or break your Internet marketing strategy. So write each page of your site with a particular market and a particular product in mind.

For example, if you sell accounting software for small businesses, you might write a generic page describing how your software helps all small businesses. But your lack of focus means that you have to be somewhat bland, generic and nondescript.

On the other hand, if you choose a specific target market – for example, work-at-home single mums running network marketing businesses in the health and wellness industry – your market is smaller (much smaller, in this example!), but you can write a Web page that's so much more relevant to their exact requirements.

You might be reluctant to narrow it too much for fear of losing other potential clients. However, remember that you're not *excluding* anybody in this process. You can still write other pages for other markets, and even still write the generic page for the wide market if you choose.

## The Last Word

### Walk Your Talk

With your off-line promotion, remember you can't underestimate the power of word of mouth. Walk your talk. Get out there, get involved, meet people, support your local charities, support your local community... and people will see you as a credible person, one they are happy to do business with or to recommend to their clients.

The same principle applies to on-line marketing. Although it might sound attractive to build a Web site and rely on it to automatically bring business to you, in practice it doesn't work that way. Successful Internet marketing is all about building relationships. Aim to give value in every interaction with a potential client. That way, when they require help, they will turn to you first, because they've come to respect your skills, you've earned a level of credibility with them, and they see you as someone who gives good value.

### Use Both Off-line and On-line Methods

In this book, we've looked at off-line and on-line marketing techniques. Interestingly, most of the off-line techniques also have on-line equivalents. Whether it's by setting up joint ventures, selling products, building credibility, or buying advertising, there's an equivalent technique on the Internet.

Best of all, once you get started you'll find you can more than double your marketing results without doing twice as much work.

For example, if you write an article for publication in an industry magazine, you can also publish that article in your newsletter, on your Web site, and on other Web sites – greatly extending your reach.

You could later convert several related articles into an effective e-book that you give away on your site, allowing you to build your credibility as an expert and reach potential customers.

### Take the Next Step

We'll make our last point with a story about a real Internet marketing experiment.

Gihan's mother wrote an e-book about Sri Lankan cooking (available at [www.SriLankanCooking.com](http://www.SriLankanCooking.com)), and Gihan promoted it on the Internet using Google advertising (See – we *do* practise what we preach)!

We wrote these two advertisements for it in Google:

[Recipes From Sri Lanka](#)

Authentic Sri Lankan Cooking.

New Book Reveals All The Secrets

[SriLankanCooking.com](http://SriLankanCooking.com)

[Sri Lanka Cooking Secrets](#)

Authentic Sri Lankan Recipes.

New Book Reveals All The Secrets

[SriLankanCooking.com](http://SriLankanCooking.com)

As you can see, they look similar, but have slightly different wording. Which of these ads do you think got more clicks?

Well, the answer is that people clicked the first ad 3.9% of the time, and the second ad 1.6% of the time.

Now those numbers may not sound like much, but those are actually very good response rates for Google. But the most important point is that the first ad got almost two and a half times as many clicks as the second.

Why do you think there's such a difference between the response rates?

⇒ Is it because "Cooking" is more attractive than "Recipes"?

⇒ Maybe the word "Secrets" in the second headline sounds cheesy?

⇒ Or perhaps using the word "Secrets" twice was a mistake?

The real answer is: *Nobody knows*. There's nothing obvious that would tell you why one ad would perform better than the other. The *only* way to know is to actually run the two ads and watch what happens.

And that's the whole point.

When people ask us for our opinion about specific marketing ideas, we can certainly give you our opinion. But if you ask us about the likely *success* of any particular idea, the best

we can say is, "Sorry – we don't know. But *let's find out* by testing it and measuring the results." And that's true of almost everything in marketing, on and off the Internet.

So if you've been holding back on something because you're just not sure whether it will work ... get over it! You will probably never know - until you actually do it.

So choose a few ideas from this book and use them in your business. Test them and use the results to adapt them to work better. The more you do it, the easier it becomes.



## About Gihan Perera

Gihan Perera is a business consultant, speaker, author and entrepreneur – with clients throughout Australia, and in New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, the U.K. and Canada. He works with professional speakers and trainers, consultants, business owners, CEOs and strategic leadership teams to improve their marketing, sales and persuasion skills in one-on-one meetings, group presentations and on the Internet.

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